



U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

Washington, DC 20515

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JIM NUSSLE CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

March 5, 2001

I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before this distinguished committee. It is fitting that at a time when the Budget Committee is asking other committees to submit their views on the Federal budget, the Budget Committee should be required to justify its own budget request.

The Budget Committee will play an important part in shaping this session's legislative agenda. The budget resolution will determine the size of the tax cuts, the permissible level of discretionary spending, and the magnitude of any prescription drug initiative. Our challenge will be to do this within a framework that puts the nation on a glide path to zero debt and that preserves the surpluses of the Social Security and Medicare trust funds.

My request reflects a nineteen percent increase over the last Congress. This increase comes on the heels of what was essentially a six-year freeze in our committee budget. The Committee's budget has grown by only 0.3 percent since the 104th Congress. During the same period, the average committee budget in the House climbed by a little over sixteen percent.

Most of the increase would go toward developing a more specialized staff to keep pace, not only with our Senate counterparts, but also with the appropriations and authorizing committees. I am specifically requesting an increase in the number of available staff positions, which would be distributed between the majority and minority. Two thirds of the new slots would be allocated to the majority and one third will be allocated to the minority.

I am asking for a commensurate increase in the budget for personnel compensation -- both to retain and attract personnel in specialized vocational areas and to accommodate any additional positions granted to the Budget Committee. I further anticipate a modest increase in overtime as the committee moves into what promises to be a very busy budget cycle.

I am further requesting a modest increase in the committee's budget for equipment. Part of this increase would go towards the installation of a multimedia system that was purchased in December of last year. This request would also enable the committee to annually upgrade about one third of its computers, printers, and other equipment.

We believe that this request is reasonable in view of our committee's obligation to analyze complex data and present its analysis in a way that is meaningful to both Members and the general public.

We would increase travel expenses to accommodate additional hearings that I hope to hold in the summer and fall and on into next year.

Finally, this request does not assume any funding for detailee from the executive branch or outside consultants.

Finally, in preparing this funding request, I have consulted with the minority to determine their budgetary needs. My practice, and that of my predecessor, has been to provide the minority a third of the total budget for personnel. This translates into providing the minority a third of the available staff positions as well as a third of the line-item for personnel compensation. Additionally, it is my policy to upgrade one third of the minority's equipment each year.

I am unaware of any reasonable requests from the minority that have not been accommodated in the budget.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have on our committee's funding request.